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RULES AND REGULATIONS
OF THE
SOCIETY
FOR
BETTERING THE CONDITION OF THE POOR,
AT
CLAPHAM, SURREY,
INSTITUTED FEBRUARY 11, 1799.
To which is prefixed,
AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
ORIGIN AND DESIGNS
OF THE
SOCIETY.

LONDON:
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ACCOUNT
OF THE
ORIGIN AND DESIGNS
OF THE
SOCIETY.

THE parish of Clapham contains about 2,500 inhabitants, of whom nearly 1,200 are of a description occasionally to stand in need of charitable assistance.

In a small country village, the character and circumstances of every cottager are in general thoroughly known to any opulent person resident in it:—he naturally becomes the patron and friend of the poor—they look up to him for advice, protection and relief;—a bond of union is formed between them, equally honourable to the one, and beneficial to the other;—wealth becomes, as according to the design of Providence it ought to be, the instrument of good; and bounty is not abused where the application of it is subject to immediate inspection.

But in a market town, or populous village, no such bond of union subsists between the rich and the lower classes.

classes. The poor are too numerous to be taken under the patronage of any individual ; and the opulent families are too many for any one to consider itself as peculiarly called to the charge of the poor. What is the duty of all is the duty of none ; and it follows as a necessary but melancholy consequence, that where there is the most power, perhaps the most inclination to do good, there is often the least facility of effecting it ; and great are the unobserved distresses, and many the scenes of unknown woe, which exist within a small distance of the habitations of the wealthy.

Considerations of this kind gave birth to the “ *Society at Clapham for bettering the Condition of the Poor.*” It was remarked, that liberality was often at a loss where to bestow with discretion ; it was found that the distribution of charity was inequitable, the most deserving poor being often unknown, while the more forward received assistance from various benevolent families. The necessity of some centre of communication was felt : it was perceived, that if the opulent united, and acted in concert, more and greater good might be effected in a populous town than could comparatively be done in a small village ; that accurate information might be equally obtained, and a far greater power of communicating good might be employed ; that by the combined efforts of many, by the union of talents, experience, counsel, influence, by the money of one, the knowledge of another, the zealous activity of a third, the discretion and patient perseverance of a fourth, thrown into one common stock, far more might be effected than could possibly be done by the most strenuous exertions of an individual.

Upon

Upon this principle the Society was formed. Upwards of 30 Ladies and Gentlemen contributed to raise a fund, which was to be expended in that way, and according to that system, which should be allowed by common consent to be likely to produce the greatest good. It was agreed to drink tea together at each other's houses on the first Wednesday of each month, for the purpose of conversation and communication on these purposes. Their fund was soon augmented by the contributions of others, and by the Sacrament money, which the Rector and Churchwardens, with the approbation of the Vestry, readily entrusted to the Society's disposal.

The first step of the Society was to divide the parish into eight districts. Certain Members of the Society, resident in each, were then requested to become the *Visitors* of that district, to superintend its poor, and to carry in it the designs of the Society into execution. A general Treasurer of the Society was chosen, and one of the Visitors in each district undertook the office of Sub-Treasurer, keeping the account of money disbursed in that district, and calling district meetings of the Visitors whenever circumstances occurred which required united counsel. In some instances a district was sub-divided, each Visitor taking the peculiar charge of eight or ten adjoining poor families. By this plan the benefits of information and inspection were attained in as perfect a degree as is usually the case in a very small country village.

An accurate knowledge of the real state of the poor being the basis on which all just relief ought to be founded,
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the Society then proceeded to procure a complete list of all the poor in the parish, in a double form, viz. of the alphabetical order of their names, and the order of their residences; the occupations, family, residence, and place of legal settlement were distinguished in each. This list was intended to be perfected hereafter by the communications received from the Visitors respecting the just character of each individual contained in it.

The Society thus furnished began its operations. When application was made for relief, the case was referred to the proper Visitor, and, if necessary, it furnished a subject for conversation at the next meeting.

It may here be probably asked, “ what occasion existed
“ for a new institution for the relief of the poor, when a
“ large sum of money was already raised for their support
“ by a burthensome Poor Rate?” The answer to this question will properly elucidate the views of the Society.

That the Poor Rates do not wholly supersede the necessity of private charity, will readily be allowed by all who have been much conversant with the poor; admitting, therefore, the necessity of private charity, the Society’s design might be stated to be that of employing it to the greatest advantage. It must, however, be remarked, that the objects of the Society extend further than is usual in private charity, and much further than is generally within the view of the Overseers of the Poor.

Exclusive of the case of *non-parishioners*, who frequently
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form the most industrious and valuable part of the community in which they reside, but who are scarcely ever relieved by the Overseers, except with the view of their being removed, the attention paid to *parishioners* by a Society founded on the principle of bettering the Condition of the Poor, and by the Overseers, is of a very different kind.

The Overseers of the Poor are in general entitled to the thanks of the parish for the pains they take in executing a very troublesome office, but they have usually too little leisure to spare, and they continue in their office too short a time, to allow them to form and to execute plans of permanent advantage to the poor, much less to aim at their moral improvement ;—they are also necessarily cramped and limited in their exertions ;—they are not authorized to stretch out the hand of relief to him who is yet only beginning to sink in the abyss of poverty ; they are not empowered to nip the bud of misery 'ere it has produced its baleful fruit ; and should they, even with a view of ultimately benefitting the parish materially, expend a larger sum than would merely save a poor man from immediate urgent distress, they would incur the risk of being censured for prodigality, and for needlessly encreasing the parish burthens, already severely felt. Add to this, that coming into their office unacquainted with the real characters of the poor, it is obvious they may, for a time, unknowingly encourage the sloth of the idle, and cherish the vices of the profligate.

The Members of this Society, on the other hand, aim
chiefly

chiefly at the *real improvement and permanent happiness of the poor* around them. They wish, indeed, to supply the poor in distress with the little comforts which the usual parish allowance will not afford; but their primary object is a more important one: to employ the leisure, wealth and talents with which Providence has blessed them, the knowledge they have gained from a superior education, the judgment which they have acquired from experience, the information they have derived from the reports* of benevolent societies, the advantages they may obtain from mutual consultation.—I say, it is their object to employ leisure, wealth, talents, knowledge, information, consultation, to the good of their poorer neighbours.

The principal objects of the Society may be stated to be these three: The *moral* improvement of the poor,—their *more complete relief* in distress,—and their *permanent benefit* by the encouragement of habits of industry.

1. To attain the first point—vice and immorality are

* Particularly the excellent ones of the “Society in London for bettering the Condition of the Poor,” a Society which, it is hoped, will be rewarded with the noble gratification of beholding the happiness of thousands of their fellow creatures whose state has been meliorated by their labours. It is no mean praise of societies formed upon the plan of that in this place, that they may be considered as auxiliaries to that benevolent Society, and proper instruments to carry into effect its useful suggestions. The Members of the Society established at Clapham are sensible of the honour done them by the truly respectable Mr. Bernard, in the notice he has been pleased to take of their endeavours.---(See the 12th Report of the Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor.)

systematically

systematically discountenanced, and the virtuous are encouraged—moral and religious tracts are distributed ; children are sent to Sunday-schools, and friendly advice is urged upon the importance of attention to the duties of religion.

2. On the 2d head; much has already been done—The sick have been regularly visited, and their wants supplied. In particular cases, nurses have been allowed to them, and, where quiet was requisite, their children removed. Care has been also taken that they should not return to work before their strength was sufficiently recruited, which often is the means of throwing them back. Contagion has also by proper care been prevented from spreading.

The want of a confidential AGENT to inspect the actual state of the poor, and to make for them the refreshments of which the sick stand in need, was here felt. Accordingly, a person * in whose skill in cookery, cleanliness, assiduity, integrity, and humanity the Society could confide, residing in a central situation, was engaged, and employed in that capacity. From her appointment the Society has derived material advantages ; stores of sago, oatmeal, wine, &c. are entrusted to her care, and upon receiving a note for that purpose, she visits the sick, and makes the refreshments ordered for them : with her also are deposited the Society's materials for industry ; flax, worsted, wool, twine, &c. of these she keeps a regular account, delivers them according to order to the poor, and receives them back manufactured ; so that her

* Mrs. Garrard, Polygon Buildings.

house becomes a repository of industry. She keeps a register * also of nurses and char-women, whom the Society can recommend, and whose interest it will become not to discredit the Society's recommendation.

3. But it must ever be remembered that the chief preservative of the poor from distress is their own steady industry. To this point, therefore, the attention of the Society is principally directed. Children are trained up in the habits of early industry: a school has been formed for teaching young children to knit; others are instructed in spinning, or employed in netting or other useful occupations. By these means upwards of seventy children and grown persons are now busily employed, who, a few months ago, were wasting their hours in idleness.

Such is the nature of the Society for bettering the condition of the poor in this place. Subjoined is an abstract of their receipts and expences during the last year. It will be seen that a fresh contribution is requisite to carry on the Society's designs. Last year the subscription was confined principally to the members of the Society; but after experience of the effects of its labours, they come forward with confidence to request a more extended supply of aid. Those whose engagements in business will not permit them to take an active share in the duties of charity may safely entrust to the disposal of the Society part of the bounty with which Providence has blessed them. They will have the satisfaction of reflect-

* Respectable families wanting nurses or char-women may thus be supplied, by applying to Mrs. Garrard.

ing that at least it will not be wilfully abused, and that it may serve not only to relieve temporary distress, but to do permanent good to the indigent.

N. B. Any donation will be thankfully received by the Treasurer, or any of the visitors.

If the Society's fund is enlarged, it may be enabled hereafter to extend its designs, by giving premiums to the most industrious and deserving amongst the different classes of the poor ; and by cultivating in various ways a laudable spirit of exertion and improvement.

Annual subscriptions are to be considered as due at Lady-Day.

DISTRICTS and VISITORS.

1st District, extending from Mrs. Horne's to the School-house Yard.

Visitors.—Mrs. E. Horne, Miss Brogden, Mrs. R. Barclay, Mrs. Crew, Mr. Robert Barclay, (Common) Mr. Crew.

2d District, School-house Yard, North Row, Nag's Head.

Visitors.—Mrs. Stainforth, Mrs. Petrie, Mrs. Saville, Mrs. Venn, Miss Stonefreet, Miss Crompton, Miss A. Petrie, Rev. Mr. Venn.

3d District, Lark-hall Lane to Wm. Thornton Astell's, Esq.

Visitors.—Mrs. Elliott, Miss Dyfons, Miss Bewicke, Miss Venn, Mr. Elliott.

4th District, Polygon Buildings.

Visitors.—Mrs. Ravenhill, Miss Wilkinson, Miss Driver, Miss C. Wells, Rev. Mr. Sharpe.

5th District, From the Cock to Mr. Fairbairn's, including Bromell's Buildings.

Visitors.—Mrs. Prior, Miss E. Smith, Miss Cradows, Miss Prior, Mr. Prior.

6th District, London Road.

Visitors.—Miss Barclay, Mr. Barclay (Terrace.)

7th District, Acre Lane.

Visitors.—Mrs. Thornton, Mrs. Ja. Barclay, Mrs. Kenyon, Miss Thornton, Miss Kenyon, Mr. J. Barclay.

8th District, South side of Common and Rookery.

Visitors.—Mrs. R. Thornton, Miss Bewicke, Rev. Mr. Sharpe.

Treasurer.—Rev. J. Venn.

Agent.—Mrs. Garrard, *Polygon Buildings.*

R U L E S.

§ 1. *General Purposes and Regulations of the Society.*

I. THE Society to be called "The Society for bettering the Condition of the Poor in Clapham," and to consist both of ladies and gentlemen who are willing to take an active part in visiting and assisting the Poor.

II. Its objects to be these ; the discovery and relief of cases of real distress, the assisting and rewarding of honest industry, the detection of fraud and imposture, the discouragement of idleness and vice, the employment of children in early occupations of industry ; and, in a word, whatever has a tendency to improve the condition and morals of the Poor.

III. The Society to meet at each other's houses and drink tea together, every first Wednesday in the month during the winter season, and during the summer once in two months, for the purpose of conversation and communication on the above subjects.

IV. The parish to be divided into eight districts, and several Visitors to be requested to superintend each district.

V. The Visitors of each district to meet together as often as shall be convenient, for the purpose of acting in con-

cert, and becoming acquainted with the state of the Poor in their districts.

V. A Sub-treasurer to be appointed for each district for the purpose of keeping the accompts of the money expended in it, and calling district meetings of the Visitors.

VI. The Visitors of each district, if they shall judge it convenient, to subdivide the district into certain portions, one or more Visitors taking one portion as their peculiar charge.

VII. At each *general* meeting the Visitors to report what cases of distress they have met with in their district, what observations they have to make on any of the poor, and what remarks have suggested themselves on the means of improving their conduct and bettering their condition. The accompts of the Treasurer of each district shall be read, examined, and such sums be granted out of the general fund as shall be necessary.

VIII. A Treasurer to be appointed who shall keep the general accompts, and record the minutes of the general meetings. Subscriptions and benefactions to be received. No general subscription will be solicited ; but each Visitor is requested to mention the plan of the Society to the opulent families with whom he or she is acquainted, and receive from them whatever sums they think proper to contribute to the Society's fund.

IX. The Society to communicate with the officers of

the parish, from whom it may receive important information, and to whom it may communicate in return useful observations.

X. Each medical gentleman in the parish is requested to give his countenance and friendly assistance to the Society, by becoming an honorary member.

XI. The services of any lady or gentleman who will be so kind as to act as a Visitor, to be accepted upon being proposed to a general meeting by the Visitors of any district in which she or he may wish to assist.

§ 2. *Visitor's Relief.*

I. Whenever application is made by a poor person to any member of the Society for relief, such application shall be referred by him to the Treasurer of the district in which the person soliciting relief resides.

II. The Treasurer of the district, upon receiving such application is requested to state it to the particular Visitor of the subdivision in which the poor person resides, (if the district is subdivided) who will be so kind as to make all necessary enquiries into the case.

III. In cases of great urgency the Visitor to give immediately whatever relief is thought necessary ; but afterwards it is to be referred to the district meeting to determine in

in what way, and to what extent assistance may be best administered.

IV. Before any relief is granted information should be particularly sought concerning the moral character of the applicant, particularly if he is accustomed to attend public worship ; whether he sends his children to school, and trains them up in habits of industry. An account is also to be taken of his weekly earnings, expences, and debts ; and the particular cause of his distress is to be investigated. This information will serve as a basis on which to found both the kind and quantity of relief which it will be proper to administer.

V. No *money* in any case to be given as an alms ; the funds of this Society being wholly appropriated to the purchase of necessaries for the poor by the Visitors in times of peculiar distress, and to the encouragement and supply of industry.

VI. Whenever a poor married woman shall deposit a certain sum weekly in the hands of the Visitor of her district to provide for her confinement, the Society will add to it as much more when it is returned to her.

VII. The Society will furnish any of the poor gratis with unflaked lime to whitewash their apartments, if they will give their time and trouble to do it.

VIII. The Society will lend blankets to some of the most indigent and deserving amongst the poor, under the following regulations.

1. A note to be given with them expressing the date of their being lent, and the day on which they are to be returned.

2. An account to be kept by the Society's Agent, in her book, of the number of each blanket, and the person to whom lent, the time when, and the date when returned.

3. The blankets lent to any poor family for the winter season are to be returned on the first of May, clean washed if required.

4. In cases where any infectious disorder has prevailed in the family to which they have been lent, a discretionary power is allowed to the Visitor to permit them to be kept.

5. All the blankets, upon being returned to the Society, are to be baked before they are laid up in the Society's stores.

IX. The members of this Society in general are requested to endeavour to prevail upon the parents of those children whom they find playing in the streets on the Sunday, to send them to the Sunday-school.

X. A stock to be procured of useful and popular tracts, calculated to instruct the ignorant and reform the thoughtless ; which the Visitors are requested to distribute to the poor as they shall see expedient.

§ 3. *Industry.*

I. The general rule for the proper distribution of charity should always be that of endeavouring to direct, assist, and encourage industry.

II. The Visitors are requested to give their particular attention to the subject of pointing out, or providing work for the poor ; especially for the women and children. They are desired also to take notice of the Children in their respective districts who are of a proper age for school, and send them to the charity school ; and to report to the Agent those nurses or char-women, whom they can recommend, who want employment, and those young persons who are of a proper age for service, and have a good character.

III. The Visitors are requested to supply all such indigent persons as appear to be truly industrious but want employment, with spinning-wheels, and materials for spinning, knitting, or netting ; and to direct the Agent to pay them for their work when finished at the market price.

§ 4. *Contagious Fevers.*

When any case of contagious fever shall occur, the Treasurer of the Society upon its being reported to him, is requested to consult with the medical gentlemen of the

place, and to use, at the Society's expence, the most effectual means of putting a stop to its spreading.

The following Means having been recommended and used with Success, are here printed for the purpose of conveying more general Information.

I. Communication with other houses to be prevented as much as possible. The children of the family yet in health, to be removed, if it can be done, and boarded out at the expence of the Society. Before their removal they are to be thoroughly washed from head to foot in warm water and clean linen put on, and their cloaths fumigated by being exposed to the vapour of burning brimstone.

II. All the linen taken from the sick to be thrown into a tub of cold water in which some vinegar or mineral acid is mixed, and kept soaking there for some days*. All discharges from the patient should be instantly removed; the house to be ventilated as much as possible, the doors and windows of the rooms in which the sick lie to be set open whenever it can be done with safety. Fresh air generally operates as a cordial to the sick, the patient may be easily secured from too great a draught of it.

* If this precaution is not taken, the contagion is often conveyed to the laundress, to whom it is sent in a bundle to be washed. Since this Society was established, a poor woman lost two of her children, and was herself brought into imminent hazard of her life, by taking in a bundle of cloaths to wash for a family in which some of the children were infected with a scarlet fever.

* The air of the room should never be allowed to feel close or smell offensively to persons entering it. Attendants should be careful not to stand in the current of air which sets from the patient, nor to approach him too near unnecessarily, or while fasting.

IV. The steam of boiling vinegar, or the vapour of burning tobacco to be occasionally introduced to refresh the air of the room†.

V. The bodies of the dead to be interred as soon as possible.

VI. After recovery, the blankets, bedding, &c. used by the sick, should be exposed in a close room to the vapour of half an ounce of brimstone thrown upon a chafing dish or pan of burning coals, and the room left for an hour or two. Afterwards they ought to be washed, and after being exposed to the open air and wind for several days, they may be used with perfect safety. The

* Dr. Haygarth observes, that the poison of a contagious fever in a small, close, and dirty room is highly dangerous; but that, in a large, airy, and clean apartment, even putrid fevers are seldom or never infectious: when this poisonous vapour is much diluted with fresh air it is not noxious.

† Dr. Carmichael Smyth has lately shewn the nitric acid to possess an extraordinary efficacy in destroying contagion: see his very valuable treatise on that subject. There is some risque in entrusting this powerful preparation to the hands of unexperienced persons; as, by the use of materials not sufficiently pure, or the want of proper care, the unwholesome nitrous acid may be produced instead of the nitric. For this reason the further description of it here is omitted.

walls also of the apartment of the sick should be white-washed with hot lime.

By attention to the above plain and simple rules, the violence of an infectious fever, which often almost depopulates a place when introduced amongst the crowded and neglected habitations of the poor, may be so abated as seldom to spread beyond the room in which it originated. The value of this in a political point of view is incalculable.

§ 5. *Duty of the Agent.*

I. The Agent, at the request of any of the Visitors, shall visit any poor or sick person, and shall make them such refreshments as shall be ordered by the Visitor, according to the receipt appointed by the committee.

II. She shall keep an exact account of the disposal of the stores of sago, oatmeal, wine, &c. entrusted to her care; entering into separate columns of a book appointed for that purpose the quantities used, the persons to whom sent, the Visitor by whose order.

III. She shall keep a register of such nurses and charwomen as are approved by the Society, and ordered to be put upon their list, who may have the liberty of informing her when they want employment. The Visitors, or any respectable inhabitant, upon application to her may

thus know who are disengaged, and who can be recommended for their good characters.

IV. She shall take care of the blankets belonging to the Society, and enter into the Society's book the date when, and the person to whom lent, according to the rules before specified.

V. She shall also keep the Society's materials for industry, flax, wool, worsted, twine, &c. entrusted to her; she shall keep an exact account, specifying the date when, and to whom delivered, and by whose order, when returned, what weight, what value;—and she is to pay the poor for their work according to the price stipulated.

APPENDIX.

The following Address having been read by the Treasurer at the anniversary of the Society's establishment, is added here at their request, as tending to elucidate the principle upon which exertions for the relief of the poor ought to be made.

ADDRESS.

THE Society "for bettering the condition of the poor at Clapham" having now been established for a year, I may be indulged, I hope, in congratulating the Society upon the effects which its labours have produced.

The ladies engaged in it have been induced cheerfully and regularly to visit the obscure habitations of the poor, to attend the bed-side of their sick and dying indigent fellow creatures, to administer relief to their necessities, and to soothe their sorrows. An Agent has been appointed for the purpose of providing for the poor the refreshments which are absolutely necessary in a period of sickness. Measures have been successfully taken to prevent infectious fevers from spreading, where they have been introduced amongst the habitations of the poor—A school has been established for training up in industry those children who are yet too young to be admitted into the public school. Relief has in various ways been administered to the needy, so that the severe pressure of the present season of distress has comparatively been little felt in this place.

But while a just share of praise is due to the Society for its useful labours, the survey of them will naturally suggest hints for future improvement; and, in venturing to state those which occur to me, I have too high an opinion of the candor of the Society to fear from it any imputation of arrogant confidence, or unbecoming interference.

The completeness of the outline which has been chalked out in the Society's rules leaves little occasion to propose any thing new. Let that outline be properly filled up, and the Society will have achieved no small degree of good.

The distinguishing object of this Society has been defined to be "*the bettering the condition of the poor.*" In this comprehensive definition, the relief of their immediate wants and

the addition of the little comforts of which their situation admits, have undoubtedly a place ; but it is a secondary place only which they hold. Something much more important is implied in that expressive phrase of “ bettering their condition.”

Merely to supply the immediate wants of a poor man is comparatively a small thing. This may be done by any person who possesses money ; but to extricate him from future want, to cut off the sources of his poverty, to instil into him good principles, to elevate his mind to a state of independence, to raise him to a higher tone of character.—This is a work worthy of the talents and knowledge, which a society founded upon the principle of bettering the condition of the poor ought to display. Reform, not alms-giving is their object ; the lasting good, not the temporary relief of the indigent is their aim. It is not merely by charity, it is by a *discriminating* charity, an union of judgment and charity, they seek to be guided.

No country under Heaven possesses a more genial climate, a more fertile soil, a more regular demand for labour in the various branches of a widely extended commerce, laws more mild and equal, securing even to the lowest peasant his rights and property, than England : In no country under Heaven have larger sums of money been bestowed upon the poor in all the varied kinds of charity.—Yet painful it is to say, perhaps in no country are there more numerous and more distressing objects of wretchedness to be seen. What is the cause ? Not the want of charity ; but perhaps the want of just application of that charity.

There is a certain wholesome severity which is necessary to be exercised towards others, as well as ourselves in promoting reform. We must operate by giving effect to those inconveniences and distresses which a thoughtless or an indolent life necessarily produces. These are intended by Providence to stimulate to industry ; and we

counteract the wise designs of Providence if we inconsiderately remove them.

There is a spring and energy in an independent spirit which is capable of great exertions. Nothing damps, nothing extinguishes that independence of mind so much as the habitual reception of alms. The very character of a man who subsists upon charity is changed. He has lost his boldness, his fortitude, his openness, his manliness, and is become mean, abject, pusillanimous, and often deceitful.

Let me not be thought to repress charity: No, it is my aim to encourage charity in its best form and highest excellence. That is true charity which promotes the *ultimate* good of the poor. It is in some cases an act of as real charity to withhold alms as in others to bestow them. At Hamburgh the first step towards that radical improvement of the state of the poor, which has been contemplated with so much satisfaction by every benevolent mind, and which forms a new æra in the science of managing the poor; I say the first step was, to forbid all alms whatsoever, as soon as work could be offered to the indigent.

The regulations adopted at Hamburgh may be looked upon as a kind of text-book for all charitable Societies. We find amongst them the following excellent maxims:

“ No man should be permitted to receive a shilling which
 “ he would have been able to have earned for himself. The
 “ support of those who receive relief ought always to
 “ be reduced below the scale of what any industrious man or
 “ woman in such circumstances can earn. Every assistance
 “ which supercedes the necessity of working becomes a
 “ premium to idleness. One shilling which a poor man
 “ earns does him more service than two which are given
 “ him.”

The means which this Society proposes to use are in unison with these maxims.

One chief object of its institution is the *reformation of principles*. Here much remains yet to be done. Moral evil is the root, natural evil the fruit which it produces. In vain a man is relieved, if he retains a corrupt principle which will again lead him into debauchery, idleness, or gaming. More than the mines of Peru can supply is required to rescue that man from misery and want. He must be reformed.

Here, friendly exhortations to attend the worship of God, serious remonstrances on the consequences of sin, kind addresses on the value of peace of conscience, and the happiness of a sober and righteous life, and prudent advice on the importance of self-denial, œconomy, and patience, will do more good than many shillings bestowed in alms, which often serve as fuel to inflame the passions. To give without reforming, is but to pour water into a broken cistern.

I am aware indeed of the difficulty of producing reformation ; some appear to be incorrigibly idle and profligate : let us not, however, pronounce any to be such till every method of reform has been tried with them. Should they however be found to be of this description, it may be proper entirely to withhold relief from them, that more may be done for the deserving. Nay further, if they have gained no settlement here, and it is possible to remove them to their proper parishes, this ought to be done, in order that their places may be filled up by a more sober and industrious set. No better character could be given to this respectable parish than to have it generally said that it is no place for the idle and worthless. I am happy here to congratulate the Society upon the appointment of a committee to manage the parochial poor, who will go hand in hand with this Society in the promotion of their great object, the bettering the condition of the poor.

For the purpose of effecting any real reformation, a thorough and impartial knowledge of the characters of the poor ought to be obtained. Much information has doubt-

less been already acquired on this head by the Visitors during their labours in the past year ; but it requires to be extended, to be more generally diffused amongst the members of the Society, to be registered. I beg leave to remark on this head, that the regular subdivision of the districts is admirably calculated to procure and to diffuse this knowledge. A Visitor who confines his attention to eight or ten poor families will soon be as thoroughly acquainted with these as with the members of his own family.

Perhaps it might be adviseable to increase the number of Visitors, or to engage some person in the middle class to assist as subordinate Visitors. By Visitors of this class appointed to a district, and making their report to the Society through the medium of the regular Visitors, much information might be obtained of the most authentic kind, and a greater number of persons, and those of various classes, would be employed in doing good to their poorer fellow creatures.

The procuring of *employment* for the poor is another most important branch of charity. The gain upon that employment is not material where labour is offered only as a substitute for alms. The industry here exercised is the gain, and a gain more valuable than money. Some occupation might be recommended for vacant hours and days : a man might be taught to net, to knit, &c. or, in some cases employment might be given him in the way of his own business, however useless it might be to the Society ; only care should be taken that no greater wages should be given him than he was fairly entitled to from his labour. They that have nothing to do will go to the public house, the grand resort of the idle and the profligate ; and then poverty will become more wretched, indolence will degenerate into settled idleness, and misery terminate in ruin.

In a word, let it be the aim of this Society to say, not merely this man was hungry, and we fed him, but this man was naked, and behold he is clothed by his own industry ;

this man was a drunkard and his family in rags, behold him sober, and see them decently clad. This man was idle, and poor, and miserable, now he is industrious, prosperous, and happy; and above all, this man was a wretched profligate, and now he is moral and religious. When the Society can appeal to these proofs of its utility, it will have deserved well of mankind, and may justly rejoice in the success of its labours.

